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AUTHOR Wilkinson, Louise Cherry: Calculator, Steve
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ABSTRACT

Fifty-four first grade students comprising eight reading groups in three separate classrooms participated in a study that examined effective and appropriate communication in peer-directed groups. Specifically, the study investigated selected aspects of requests for information and action and their relationship to language ability, social competence, and reading achievement. Each student was tested individually to determine language ability, reading achievement, and social competence, and each group was videotaped while engaged in reading activities. The tapes were transcribed and coded for requests for action or directions and requests for information or questions. The results indicated that the students were effective in obtaining compliance to their requests for action and information more than two-thirds of the time. In addition, the findings showed that effective and appropriate speech was related to reading achievement and structural language knowledge, but not to social competence. (FL)

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Technical Report No. 564

EFFECTIVE AND APPROPRIATE REQUESTS
IN FIRST-GRADE READING GROUPS

by

Louise Cherry Wilkinson and Steve Calculator

Report from the Project on
Studies of Instructional Programming for the Individual Student

Louise Cherry Wilkinson
Faculty Associate

Wisconsin Research and Development Center
for Individualized Schooling
University of Wisconsin
Madison, Wisconsin

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Communication through effective and appropriate use of language is crucial for learning in the classroom. We consider the classroom to be an interactional context in which teachers and students meet to exchange information. In addition, evaluation of performance is provided for students. Effective communicators use their knowledge of language forms, functions, and contexts to achieve goals in conversation, such as obtaining materials from teachers and peers, and securing responses to requests for information. Appropriate communicators comply with the societal conventions which apply to language use in the classroom, such as cooperating by taking turns at talking and speaking politely. In this report, we discuss the concepts of effective and appropriate speakers to characterize selected aspects of children's development and display of communicative competence in the classroom. The paper reports a study of first-grade children's use of language in all-student reading groups, including individual differences and their relationship to language ability, social competence, and reading achievement.

Theorists from the related disciplines of linguistics, education, psychology, anthropology, and sociology have formulated notions about the specific kinds of pragmatic knowledge necessary to the use of language in context. Some of these ideas are offered as rules or models, others as definitions. Our approach is to select some of these concepts in order to characterize effective and appropriate speech. In the following discussion these two concepts will be considered separately and relevant theoretical constructs will be introduced. The use of requests will be

highlighted in this discussion, since the study which is reported focuses primarily on that function of language.

Effective speakers use their knowledge of language forms, functions, and contexts to achieve their communicative goals in conversation. For example, in the case of requests, an effective speaker usually obtains compliance from listeners. Goffman (1964) regards conversation as one variety of "face-to-face" interaction, which consists of "turns at talking and things said during one's turn" (p. 136). Thus, the most basic rules which refer to the tasks of speakers in conversation are sequential rules, which govern the ways speakers progress from one utterance to the next (Labov, 1972) and the rules of alternation and co-occurrence, which govern the choice of a particular form of expression within each speaker's turn (Ervin-Tripp, 1973). One model of conversational turn-taking specifies that turns at talking can be allocated by the current speaker's choice of the next speaker, or by the next speaker choosing him- or herself (Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974). Effective speakers are successful at securing turns at talk for themselves; they do not exclusively rely upon others to allocate turns to them, but usually prefer to initiate on their own.

The choice of a particular form of linguistic expression is determined by many factors of the social and linguistic context and language knowledge. Through their choices, speakers perform speech acts in which they attempt to communicate their intentions to listeners (Searle, 1969). The actions of effective speakers result in their listeners' recognition of the speaker's intentions. Grice (Note 1) believes conversations are cooperative efforts between speakers and listeners, each of whom recognizes to some extent the

common goals and direction. He identifies four rules which, when used, result in the successful application of the cooperative principle. Speakers should be informative, truthful, relevant, and clear.

Linguistic expressions differ in their degree of clarity and in the inferencing required for a particular intention to be recognized. Effective speakers express speech acts clearly and directly. They attempt to minimize ambiguity and multiple interpretations of the same utterance through explicitly stating the agent, action, and object in the utterance, using direct forms, and specifically designating a particular listener to which a request is addressed. According to Grice (Note 1), speakers are able to perceive that a particular speech act has been communicated, despite its indirectness or heavy reliance on inference. Listeners may integrate the form and content of the utterance itself with the social context and the shared cooperative principle to achieve an accurate recognition of the speaker's intention.

Labov and Fanshel (1977) offer a model which represents the shared understanding between speakers and listeners when requests are made. The preconditions of their model specify the action, purpose, and need for the request; the ability and obligation of the listener to comply with the request; and the right of the speaker to make the request. One implication of the model is that to be effective, these conditions should be met (i.e., sincere) by speakers when they make requests. The preconditions are frequently referred to by speakers producing indirect requests or mitigating/aggravating requests. According to Labov and Fanshel, the demands of face-to-face social interaction require speakers to use various

mitigating techniques to soften their requests in such a way as to avoid offending their listeners. These mitigated forms present the listener with a number of options in responding besides presenting the listener with a choice to comply or not. A request is aggravating when the force of the request is strengthened by repeating the same request in the same way. Effective speakers should be flexible in issuing their requests, particularly when compliance is not obtained initially. Providing additional information may be more effective than merely repeating the same request over again.

Appropriate speakers observe the social norms governing the use of language in conversation. Goffman (1963) regards conversation as a kind of "focused interaction": That is, the kind of interaction which occurs when people get together and openly cooperate to sustain a single focus of attention, through turns at talking. His notion resembles Grice's (Note 1) cooperative principle of conversation. The crucial principle of reciprocity characterizes the uniqueness of conversational interaction. Speakers are expected to produce language which is able to be understood and acted upon; listeners are expected to interpret this speech and to produce responses which seem reasonable and appropriate. There are societal conventions which govern the ways reciprocity is achieved. These conventions differ according to the situation, such as the classroom, the dinner table, or the factory. Theorists have provided some ideas which can be interpreted as statements of the societal conventions governing conversations. They include notions of deference, politeness, sincerity, cooperation, social status, mitigation, and power.

The rules of sequencing and linguistic choice are relevant to our discussion of the appropriate speaker as well as the effective speaker. Appropriate speakers will wait their turn; they will not interrupt other speakers, and the gaps and overlaps of speech will be minimized. Choosing the most appropriate form of expression is a key task for the speaker. They must choose the form which not only communicates meaning but also marks social status, and they must be consistent in their choice of expression across the discourse unit. Speakers are expected to be sincere in addition to being cooperative.

Appropriate speakers are expected to be polite in their conversations. Lakoff (1972) presents a model regarding the rules of politeness. First of all, speakers should not impose on one another, e.g., they should not intrude into one another's business or should ask permission before doing so. Secondly, speakers should give their listeners options in responding. Thirdly, speakers are expected to be friendly (i.e., make one another feel good).

Folger and Puck (Note 2) examined the relationship between language and power/deference roles by analyzing the request forms in responses used by participants in a doctor-patient interaction. Requests for action or directives are considered to be dominant; requests for permission to carry out some action convey submission. Requests for information can be dominant, when a speaker attempts to persuade the listener or alternatively submissive, when the speaker attempts to gain information from the listener which the speaker needs.

Labov and Fanshel's (1977) concept of the mitigation of requests to avoid offending listeners is also an aspect of politeness. Speakers may

soften their requests by explaining the need for the requests, by referring to a particular precondition, or allowing listeners the option of choosing the time of carrying out the request. These tempered requests reflect Lakoff's (1972) discussion of politeness as well as Henley's (1977) view that mitigation of requests reflects a subordination in status, whereas aggravation is associated with a dominant speaker addressing a listener of lower status.

In sum, there are several conceptual notions regarding effective and appropriate speakers which may prove useful for the present analysis as a test of three models. Effective speakers must secure turns at talk; they must choose the most effective forms to communicate their intentions to listeners and be able to evaluate those of their listeners. Effective speakers must cooperate with listeners by being sincere, clear, and flexible. Appropriate speakers must wait their turns, be consistent in the selection of forms across discourse units, and choose the best forms that are not offensive to express their needs. They must be cooperative, sincere, polite, and they must respect status differences.

This brief overview of effective and appropriate speakers provides some indication of the complex nature and large number of rules which may underlie communicative competence. It is not sufficient for the child to merely know the rules. Often, the rules which govern effective and appropriate speech appear to be inconsistent and may even compete with one another.

Consider the directive or request for action. Emphatic, direct, and explicit forms of expression for requests for action are probably the most

effective means of communicating that intention to listeners. This is, however, not the only consideration in deciding upon the most appropriate and effective choice of form. Succinct directives may not always be successful in obtaining compliance with either child or adult listeners. They do not provide listeners with options in responding and may not result in listener compliance, particularly if the listener perceives them as rude (Read & Cherry, 1978). Thus, an apparent paradox is evident: There may be competing tendencies for speakers in their production of language forms. They may have learned that the probability of a listener understanding a request for action is maximized when that request is phrased clearly and emphatically; yet the probability of listener compliance is also maximized when the request is phrased politely, or given indirectly. Thus, the task of acquiring communicative competence for the child must seem formidable. Not only must the individual learn the structural and functional rules which enable him or her to produce speech, but also, the social norms which govern the effective and appropriate use of language to achieve communicative goals in conversation.

One approach to children's communicative development is to compare children's strategies with those used by adults. This approach reveals some areas in which the children's system may be incompletely developed (e.g., accounting for refusals, Wilkinson & Dollaghan, 1979), from an adult's point of view. Goffman (1963) has referred to children as "communication delinquents," since often, they violate adult rules. We can regard the child's display of communicative competence as an incompletely developed version of the adult system.

It is also possible to take another approach to the study of children's language, in which their system is described without reference to the adult system (Ervin-Tripp & Mitchell-Kernan, 1977). Some research has demonstrated that young children's ability to accomplish a variety of ends through the use of language may not exactly mirror the adult system (e.g., the strategies used by children to issue, mitigate, aggravate, and respond to requests, Wilkinson & Dollaghan, 1979). In the present study, both approaches will be taken. Many of the concepts introduced will be elaborated in light of new evidence provided by data on children's language use in first-grade, peer-directed reading groups.

Three issues are addressed by the reported study. One concerns first-grade students' effective and appropriate communication in peer-directed reading groups. A second issue concerns individual differences in these aspects, while the third concerns their relationship to language ability, social competence, and reading achievement.

Methods

Subjects

The subjects were 54 first-grade students who comprised 8 reading groups in 3 separate classrooms of 1 school. According to the teachers, the students' reading abilities and reading readiness at the beginning of the school year differed in the groups. All of the students were Caucasian, native speakers of English, from middle-class families, and ranged in age from 6 to 7 years. There were no students diagnosed to have

learning disabilities or any language problems at the beginning of the study. There were 23 males and 31 females in the study.

Data Collection

Recording the reading event. A reading activity was the unit of sample for data collection. Reading activity typically began at 9:00 and lasted until approximately 9:40 in each of the classrooms; teachers announced both the beginning and the end of the activity. Students chose their seats at the reading tables designated by the teacher. The teachers often provided instructions for the reading groups when the students were in the whole-group formation; however, some of the teachers provided instructions after the students had formed their small reading groups. In either case, the beginning of the complete instructions marked the beginning of the reading event.

The reading activities were audio- and videotaped in each of the classrooms for each of the reading groups. The days chosen for taping in each classroom were regarded as typical days by the classroom teachers. Each reading group was taped during one period defined by the teacher as the reading group time.

Two portable video cameras (Sony Portapak) were used to record the reading activity of each group; cameras were visible to the students and positioned across from one another so that nearly full-face views of all the students would be on one or the other camera. Two microphones (Electra Voice 635A) were placed in the middle of each group's table.

Prior to, during, and following the recording, two observers prepared descriptions of the ongoing events in the group, including the behavior of the students, to supplement the recordings with relevant contextual information which may not have been included on the tapes. These two observers were also in the room and visible to students, so along with the members of the research team who operated the cameras, there were a total of four adults in addition to the students, teachers, and staff.

According to the principal, videotaping of both teachers and students was routine in these classrooms. The subjects were familiar with the presence of several adults in the classroom in addition to their teachers. These adults included student interns, nurses, parent aides, and various specialist teachers.

Data were collected in the fall for 3 weeks at the end of September and beginning of October, and then again in the spring for 3 weeks in April. There were four separate tapings for each reading group in each season for a total of eight samples for each group.

The reading groups were determined by the teachers prior to the study. They were composed of three to nine students, and had at least two members of each sex. The organization of the reading group was very similar to the organization revealed during a small-scale study conducted in the same school a year earlier (Wilkinson & Dollaghan, 1979). All of the groups were similar in the way that the reading activity was initiated, maintained, and terminated. Initially, there were instructions presented by the teachers; the teacher then left the reading group and the students

functioned as a group to accomplish the individual tasks which the teacher had presented. In all cases, the task was the same for all of the group members for that particular reading activity (e.g., a worksheet or a workbook page). The final phase of the reading group included another teacher-directed period occurring shortly before the groups disintegrated, where the teacher often provided evaluation. All of the groups were seated at small tables of varying shapes and sizes within the classrooms that also contained other groups of students as well as the teachers. Therefore, background noise and general environmental characteristics appeared to be comparable among the groups. The entire group activity typically ranged from 20 to 40 minutes. The dominant activity during the reading group was reading, either silently or aloud. And all of the groups performed one or more activities requiring a written (printed) response, such as completing worksheets, drawing a picture of events that the students had read about, or printing sentences from the stories. After the completion of each reading group, measures of the performance of each child within the reading group on the particular task were collected, including the percentage of items completed and scored as correct. The composition of the groups was relatively stable during the year; there were 52 students in the fall study and 39 in the spring. One reading group split into two groups midyear, so in the spring there were eight groups.

Individual assessment. Information concerning each student's language ability and reading achievement was collected by administering various for-

mal assessment tasks. Children's performance on these tasks, together with several indices of social competence, were used to assess their relationship with demonstrated communicative competence in the reading group.

Each child was tested individually in the fall and in the spring; the assessments typically lasted 45 minutes. A free speech sample consisting of approximately 50 spontaneous utterances of each child was obtained during an informal conversation in which the Experimenter posed open-ended questions regarding topics presumed to be of interest to the children, such as television, friends, and so on. Grammatical complexity was assessed by segmenting each child's transcript into a series of communication units (an independent clause plus all of its communication units), then computing the average number of words per unit using a procedure based upon Loban (Notes 3 and 4). Unlike Loban, we did not score responses limited to yes/no replies, or "okay" as communication units since, unlike Loban, the conversational framework of our speech sample did not insure narrative responses to the extent of Loban's elicited procedures. In addition, 40 rather than 30 communication units were used to increase the reliability of the scores.

Children's grammatical comprehension was assessed based upon their performance on the Miller-Yoder Test of Grammatical Comprehension (Note 5). This test, which consists of 84 items, requires the child to point to the picture, given a choice of four stimuli, that depicts the meaning of each stimulus utterance read by the Experimenter. Various syntactic structures are tested, e.g., prepositions, subject and object pronouns, possessives, tenses, and so on.

Social competence was assessed using a procedure and scoring system patterned after Shure and Spivak (1972). A sequence of three brief

"conflict" stories was presented to subjects whose task was to think of as many resolutions to the problem presented as they were able to. In each story, a problem was presented, e.g., one child took another's crayon which was needed to complete an assignment, and an outcome given, e.g., the child was happy because he or she got the crayon back. The child's task was to think of as many ways as he or she could in which the given outcome could have occurred, e.g., the second child could have told the teacher what happened.

Additional data concerning social competence of the students were obtained through a sociometric procedure which involved each child ranking his or her fellow reading group members on three dimensions: affiliation, "Who is the person that you like the best in your reading group?"; academic competence, "Who is the very best reader in your reading group?"; and leadership or dominance, "When the teacher is not with your reading group and some kids in your group are talking, and they're not supposed to be talking, who's the best at making them be quiet?". The sum of each child's rankings (as attributed by his or her peers) was used as a measure of perceived social competence.

Each child's reading ability was assessed in the fall using the San Diego Reading Test (1969) and the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Achievement Test for Reading Readiness (1969). Reading achievement was measured that spring through administration of the Metropolitan Reading Achievement Test (1976). Two of the reading tests were administered by the classroom teachers to groups of students, while the San Diego test was individually administered by one of the authors.

Analysis of Data

Indexing. The indexing of videotapes was guided by the method suggested by Erickson and Schultz (1977) and Griffin and Shuy (in press). The major events that occurred on the tapes were written down on index forms immediately after the data were collected and returned to the laboratory. The phases of the reading event were identified, and the transition points were located on the basis of verbal and nonverbal behavior. This information was helpful during the coding and transcription processes.

Transcription of tapes. The videotapes collected for each group were transcribed by a member of the research team who had been present during that day's data collection. The videotapes were transcribed from beginning to end; the transcriber used both the description and the tape indices in this process. The tapes were viewed from start to finish several times by the transcriber before she actually began to transcribe. The relatively long segment of all-student interaction for each group was chosen for detailed analysis in this study. During this segment, the teacher was not present in the group; typically, she was in the classroom assisting other students. Transcripts were rechecked against both of the tapes. Percentage agreement on these data had been previously established for word and utterance boundaries, and they exceeded 80%. Following transcription, the videotapes were viewed for relevant nonverbal and spatial information which was included on the transcripts.

Two transcripts, one coded previously by the same observer, the second by an associate, were randomly selected and recoded by the second author. Intraobserver agreement, represented as the proportion of coding agreements divided by the number of agreements plus disagreements, was then computed

with respect to each of the variables included in this study. Percent agreement ranged from 88% to 100%.

Coding. The samples of data selected for analysis were coded according to the following categories. The detailed coding rules are included in Figures 1 and 2 and Tables 1 and 2.

1. Utterance. A string of words communicating one idea, usually bounded by a pause of 1 second or more (Cherry, 1974).
2. Turn. All utterances of one speaker until the other speaker speaks (Cherry & Lewis, 1976).
3. Requests for action or directives. This category involves attempts by speakers to obtain actions performed by listeners. They were coded on eight dimensions, as shown in Figure 1 and Table 1.
4. Requests for information or questions. This category involves attempts by speakers to obtain information from listeners. They were coded on eight dimensions as shown in Figure 2 and Table 2.

Measures. The following measures were computed for each speaker. The measures were constructed to provide indices of effective and appropriate speakers. The quantity of speech was computed for each child as the number of utterances and the number of turns produced per unit time, in minutes. In addition, other measures were computed for effective and appropriate speakers for both requests for information and requests for action. Measures of effective speakers included compliances obtained divided by all requests produced, self-selected turns divided by all turns, revisions of designated requests divided by noncompliances to designated requests, and elaborated revisions divided by all revisions. Measures of both effective and appropriate speakers included designated requests

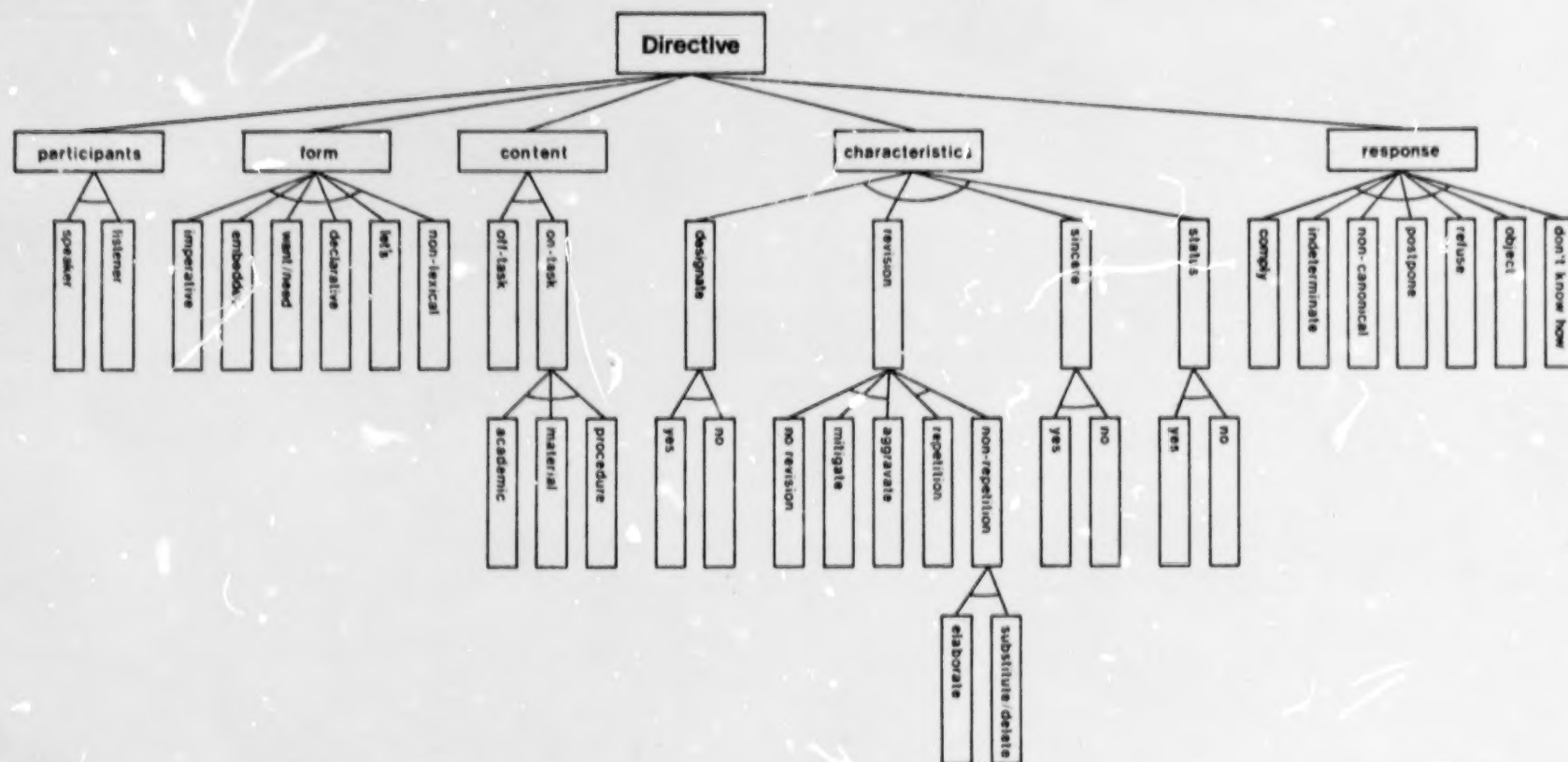


Figure 1. Coding of directives.

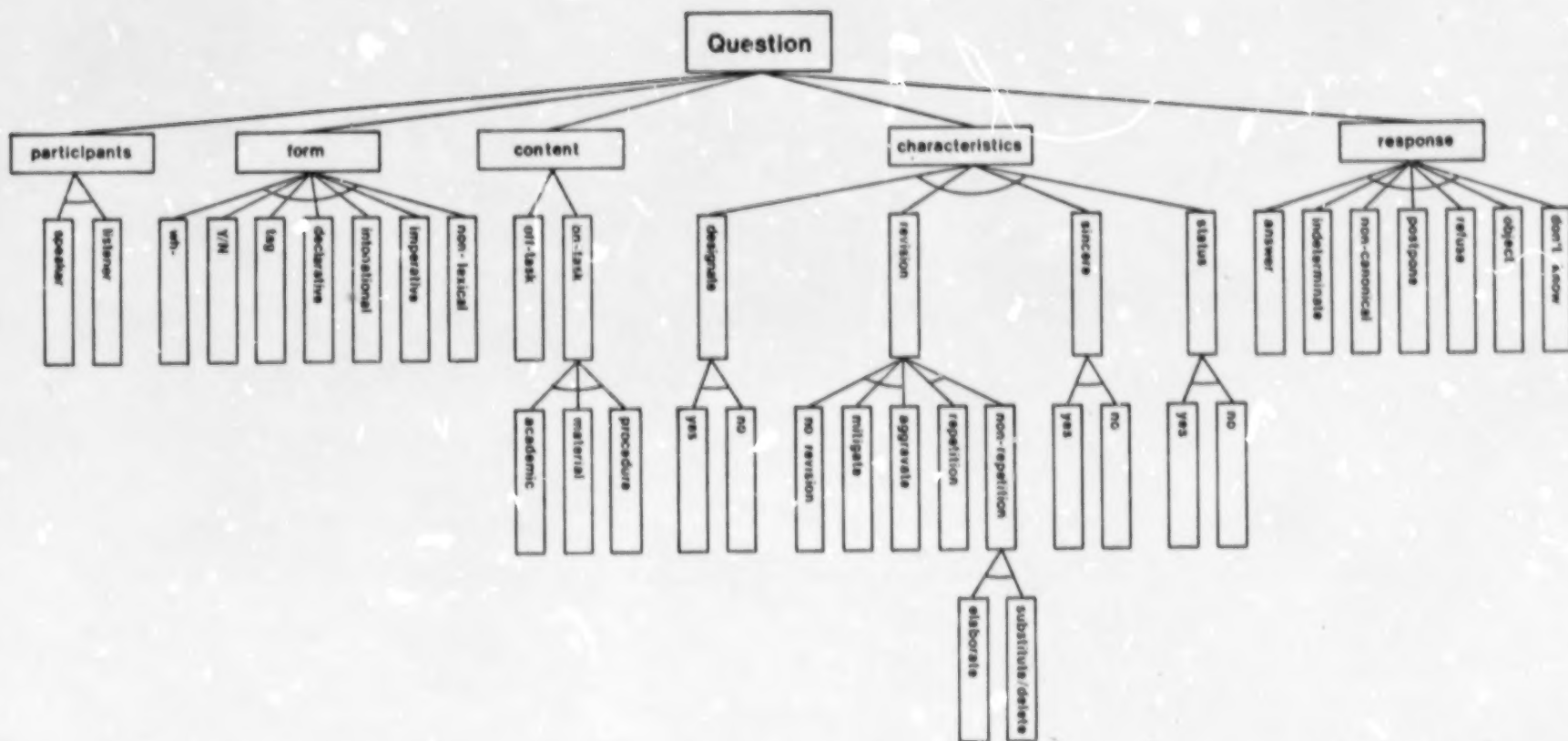


Figure 2. Coding of questions.

Table 1

The Coding System for Requests for Action (Directive)

Code	Definition
REQUESTS FOR ACTION (DIRECTIVE)	
<u>Form</u>	
Imperative:	A command form which is not embedded.
Embedded imperative:	An interrogative utterance containing a modal verb.
Want/need expressions:	Those requests in which the words "want," "need," or "wish" appear.
Declarative:	A statement issued with a directive intent.
Let's _____:	The use of the word "let's" accompanied by the desired action being requested.
Nonlexical:	The use of vocal and/or gestural displays, rather than words to request, e.g., "shh," pointing, etc.
Other:	These include sentence fragments which cannot be attributed to ellipsis of a preceding utterance. Where ellipsis does occur, the same form is recorded for both the original and the revised utterance.
<u>Content:</u>	This category is intended to reflect the topical nature of speech.
Off-task:	These requests are unrelated to the tasks, procedures, and/or materials of the reading assignment, i.e., they bear no relation to the ongoing reading task. While the identification of utterances regarding the nonimmediate context can be readily identified as being off-task, utterances involving the group's immediate context which are not related to the reading assignment are also designated off-task.
On-task:	These requests are related to the academic content, procedures, and/or materials of the reading assignment. On-task requests are coded as one of the following: (a) On-academic: These requests are aimed at obtaining a particular action needed for the completion of the assigned academic task.

Table 1 (continued)

Code	Definition
	(b) On-materials: These requests are less directly associated with the particular tasks assigned to the groups, but concern the materials used by the group, e.g., indicating possession, location, attributes, and actions associated with the materials.
	(c) On-procedures: These requests concern general task parameters rather than answer-specific objectives. They include instructions on how to do the task and group members' progress on tasks.
Other	
<u>Status:</u>	This category reflects the power structure inherent in the speaker-listener relationship.
Dominant:	By asking a listener to perform some type of action, the speaker assumes possession of the power to make such a demand.
Submissive:	When a speaker attempts to gain the listener's permission to do or say something, the request is submissive. In doing so, the speaker is in effect admitting a lack of power in the interaction. Begging is the extreme case of submissive requests.
<u>Designated:</u>	This feature indicates whether a request is designated to a specific child.
Nondesignated (i.e., diffuse):	These requests occur in two conditions: A child may unambiguously address a request to two or more listeners, any of whom are free to respond, or a child may address a question to the entire group.
Indeterminant:	When it cannot be determined whether an utterance is designated.
<u>Sincerity:</u>	This aspect refers to the nonviolation of the sincerity rules or preconditions of a valid request (after Labov & Fanshel, 1977), e.g., that the speaker wants the action carried out, that the designated listener is capable of carrying out.
Sincere:	Nonviolation of the precondition.
Insincere:	Violation of the precondition.

Table 1 (continued)

Code	Definition
<u>Response:</u>	The listener's response to each request is coded as one of the following:
Comply:	The requested action is performed. The content of the listener's response (i.e., correctness) is irrelevant to the attempt to comply with the speaker's request.
Indeterminate:	This category encompasses three conditions: (a) The listener's response cannot be coded (off-camera or unintelligible). (b) The listener does not acknowledge the speaker's having issued a request; the listener may be ignoring the speaker or perhaps the listener did not hear the request or think it was directed to that listener. (c) The listener begins to respond, but is interrupted by another child's responding to the request, after which the intended listener no longer attempts to complete the response.
Noncanonical:	The listener provides a topically consistent action which is not specific to the original request.
Postpone compliance (i.e., temporizing, putting off):	The listener evades or postpones complying to the request, e.g., by asking for more time or responding in such a way so as to postpone the need to respond. Requests for clarification appear to be the most frequently used method of postponing.
Refuse:	The listener deliberately and outrightly refuses to comply with the speaker's request without citing a reason for the refusal.
Object:	While similar to refusals, objections provide a reason for the listener's not complying with the request.
Other	
"Don't know how":	The listener conveys the inability to respond to the request.

Table 1 (continued)

Code	Definition
<u>Revision-form:</u>	Requests which followed previously unsuccessful requests by the same speaker to the same listener were examined in relationship to their preceding forms:
Repetition:	No change in content is observed (i.e., no revision takes place) in the wording of the original vs. the subsequent request. Phonetic changes are included under this category.
Constituent elaboration:	The revised utterance contains words not appearing in the preceding request which do not merely substitute, but also expand the meaning of the initial request. The relative length (in words) of the revised vs. the original request is immaterial.
Constituent reduction:	The revised utterance maintains the original request's meaning while eliminating words from the original request (e.g., the use of ellipsis).
Constituent substitution:	The revised utterance replaces a word or words found in the original request while maintaining the original request's syntactic and semantic features.
<u>Revision-content:</u>	(after Labov & Fanshel, 1977) Requests which followed previously unsuccessful requests by the same speaker to the same listener were examined in relationship to their preceding content.
Mitigation:	The softening or weakening of a request, as in "Please could you be seated." Devices include polite terms such as "please," and modal verb.
Aggravation:	The strengthening or increasing forcefulness of the request, as in "sit down." Devices include substituting a directed for a nondirected request and insults.

Table 2

The Coding System for Requests for Information or Questions

Code	Definition
REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION OR QUESTIONS	
<u>Form</u>	
Wh-question:	Questions beginning with words such as "who," "where," "when," "what," and "why."
Yes/no question:	Questions which require "yes" or "no" for an answer.
Tag question:	A statement with a question contained in the final clause, e.g., "It's cold in here, isn't it?"
Intonationally marked question:	A statement issued as a question by the use of rising, terminal pitch contours.
Declarative:	A statement issued with the intention of eliciting information.
Imperative:	Use of the imperative form to request information.
<u>Other</u>	
Nonlexical:	The use of vocal and/or gestural displays, rather than words to request information or ask a question, e.g., points to book and looks puzzled, "huh?," etc.
<u>Content:</u>	
Off-task:	This category is intended to reflect the topical nature of speech. These requests are unrelated to the tasks, procedures, and/or materials of the reading assignment, i.e., they bear no relation to the ongoing reading task. While the identification of utterances regarding the nonimmediate context can be readily identified as being off-task, utterances involving the group's immediate context which are not related to the reading assignment are also designated off-task.
On-task:	These requests are related to the academic content, procedures, and/or materials of the reading assignment. On-task requests are coded as one of the following: (a) On-academic: These requests are aimed at obtaining some particular information needed for the completion of the assigned academic task.

Table 2 (continued)

Code	Definition
(b) On-materials: These requests are less directly associated with the particular tasks assigned to the groups, but concern the materials used by the group, e.g., indicating possession, location, attributes, and actions associated with the materials. (c) On-procedures: These requests concern general task parameters rather than answer-specific objectives. They include instructions on how to do the task and group members' progress on tasks.	
<u>Other</u> <u>Status</u>	
Submissive:	When the speaker expresses a need for the information and is dependent upon the intended listener for that information.
Dominant:	When the speaker produces a statement in the request form, thus attempting to push information or opinions upon the listener, such as: "Phil, are you all done with your worksheet?" (reprimanding Phil for not completing his worksheet)
<u>Designated:</u>	This feature indicates whether a question is designated to a specific child.
Nondesignated (i.e., diffuse):	These requests occur in two conditions: A child may unambiguously address a request to two or more listeners, any of whom are free to respond, or a child may address a question to the entire group.
Indeterminant:	When it cannot be determined whether an utterance is designated.
<u>Sincerity:</u>	This aspect refers to the nonviolation of the sincerity rules or specific preconditions for requests for information (after Labov & Fanshel, 1977), e.g., that the speaker wants some particular information, and that the designated listener is capable of providing the information.
Sincere:	Nonviolation of the precondition.
Insincere:	Violation of the precondition.

Table 2 (continued)

Code	Definition
<u>Response to request:</u>	The listener's response to each request is coded as one of the following:
Comply:	The information which has been requested is provided. The content of the listener's response (i.e., correctness) is irrelevant to the attempt to comply with the speaker's request.
Indeterminate:	This category encompasses three conditions: (a) The listener's response cannot be coded (off-camera or unintelligible). (b) The listener does not acknowledge the speaker's having issued a request; the listener may be ignoring the speaker or perhaps the listener did not hear the request or think it was directed to that listener. (c) The listener begins to respond, but is interrupted by another child's responding to the request, after which the intended listener no longer attempts to complete the response.
Noncanonical:	The listener provides topically consistent information which is not specific to the original request.
Postpone compliance (i.e., temporizing, putting off):	The listener evades or postpones complying to the request, e.g., by asking for more time or responding in such a way so as to postpone the need to respond. Requests for clarification appear to be the most frequently used method of postponing.
Refuse:	The listener deliberately and outrightly refuses to comply with the speaker's request without citing a reason for the refusal.
Object:	While similar to refusals, objections provide a reason for the listener's not complying with the request.
Other	
"Don't know how":	The listener conveys the inability to respond to the request.

Table 2 (continued)

Code	Definition
<u>Revision-form:</u>	Requests which followed previously unsuccessful requests by the same speaker to the same listener were examined in relationship to their preceding forms:
Repetition:	No change in content is observed (i.e., no revision takes place) in the wording of the original vs. the subsequent request. Phonetic changes are included under this category.
Constituent elaboration:	The revised utterance contains words not appearing in the preceding request which do not merely substitute, but also expand the meaning of the initial request. The relative length (in words) of the revised vs. the original request is immaterial.
Constituent reduction:	The revised utterance maintains the original request's meaning while eliminating words from the original request (e.g., the use of ellipsis).
Constituent substitution:	The revised utterance replaces a word or words found in the original request while maintaining the original request's syntactic and semantic features.
<u>Revision-content</u>	
Mitigated:	A request which is softened by the use of indirect forms (nonlexical, embedded, declarative, use of polite term).
Aggravated:	A request which is strengthened by the use of more direct forms (interrogative, wh-question, and yes/no question).

divided by all requests¹ and direct forms of requests divided by all requests.² Measures of appropriate speakers included on-task requests divided by all requests, sincere requests divided by all requests,³ mitigated revisions divided by all revisions, and dominant requests for information divided by all requests for information.⁴

Results and Discussion

The results will be organized according to three issues: (a) a description of first-grade children's effective and appropriate use of language, including whether their characteristics predict compliance to requests and stability over time for both types of requests, (b) individual differences in usage, and (c) the relationship between usage and language ability, social competence, and reading achievement. Both qualitative and quantitative data will be presented, which includes statistical analyses and case study material. In this paper, the data are pooled for analysis initially across request types and time of year, and subsequently separate

¹ A speaker increases the likelihood of securing a response from a listener by specifically designating the request to a particular listener, which is effective. However, the use of a nondesignated request provides the listener with an option as to whether or not to respond, which is appropriate. Therefore, there is an apparent paradox in attempting to maximize the likelihood of a listener responding which simultaneously maximizes the listener's option to respond (see Read & Cherry, 1978).

² There is a similar paradox for the use of direct and indirect forms: A speaker increases the likelihood of the listener's understanding a request if it is clearly expressed through a direct form; however, the use of some direct forms, such as the imperative, are rude and inappropriate.

³ This is one measure of the listener's awareness in which some aspects of sincerity rules (or preconditions) have not been met.

⁴ Requests for action will not be analyzed for submissiveness, since they are defined as dominant.

analyses were conducted for time and type differences.

The data base included information collected for 54 children in 7 reading groups, 4 samples in the fall and 4 samples in the spring, for 12 hours of peer-directed reading group activity sampled from the 32 hours of reading group activity. There were 9,052 utterances, of which 1,875 were requests (21%) with 859 requests for action and 1,016 requests for information. Of the 1,875 requests, 415 were revisions. Thus, for each child the mean number of utterances was 131; the mean number of requests for action was 16; the mean number of requests for information was 19; the mean number of revisions was 8.

The data for the measures of effective and appropriate speaker are displayed in Figure 3. These displays are an adaptation of Tukey's (1977) "box and whisker" diagram, which has the advantage of displaying all the data and variability. The following information is given for each variable: the lowest value in the sample (black circle), the 10th percentile (dash bar), the 25th percentile (solid bar), the median (solid bar), the 75th percentile (solid bar), the 90th percentile (dash bar), and the highest value in the sample (black circle). The "box" represents the interquartile range, or middle half of the sample. Differential shading designates whether the measure is an aspect of effective speech, appropriate speech, or both.

Effective and appropriate speech. There seemed to be three kinds of variables represented in Figure 3. One group of variables, represented on the extreme left-hand side of the figure, shows high medians and small interquartile ranges (0.09 to 0.12), indicating low spread and "ceiling effects." This group of variables, which includes designated, on-task,

Proportion

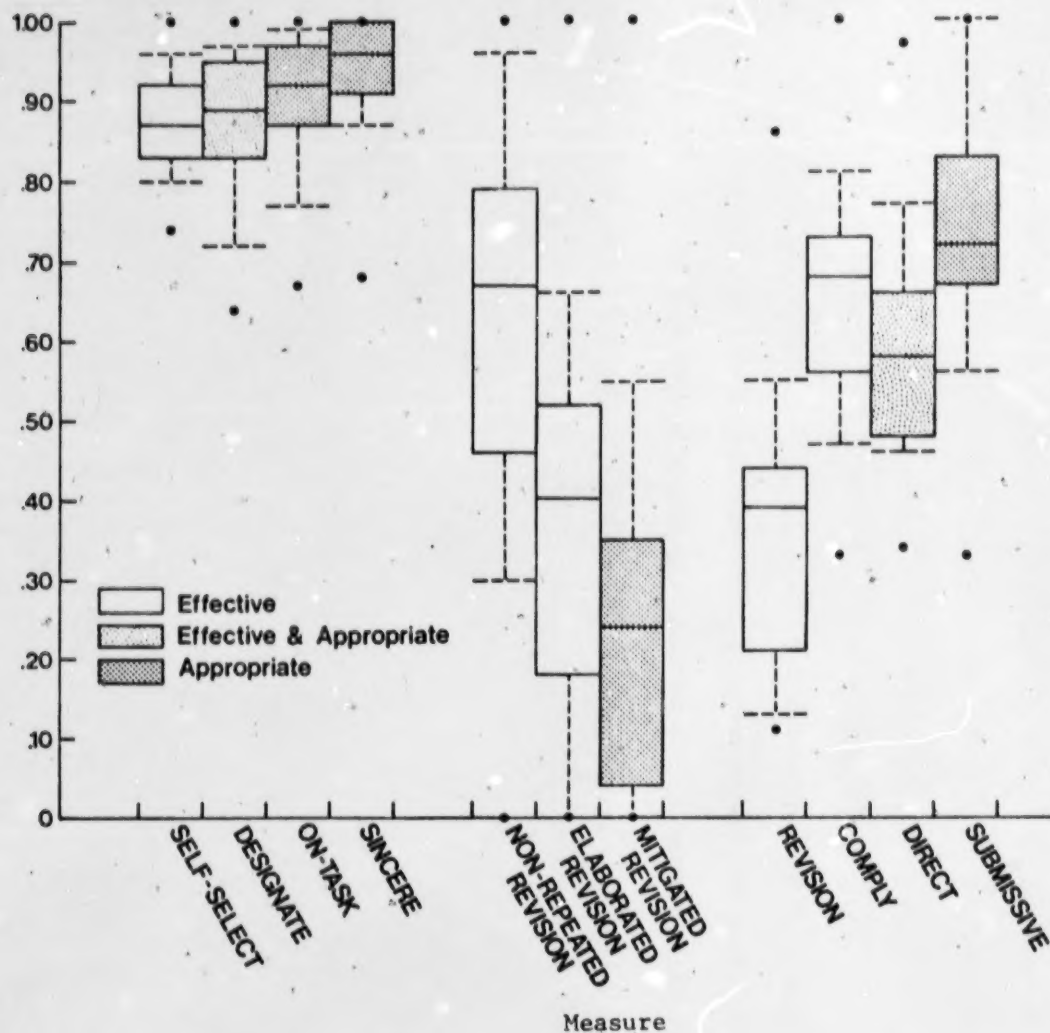


Figure 3. Proportional measures of effective and appropriate speech.

and sincere requests as well as self-selected turns, suggests a common competence among the children on these aspects of their communication.

A second group of variables, the middle "clump" in Figure 3, shows relatively low and middle level medians and a fairly large interquartile range (0.31 to 0.34), indicating a fairly broad spread. All of these variables have revisions in their denominators as the number of tokens, with three different types in the numerators. We recall that there were only 415 total revisions in the sample. Of the 54 children, 37 had less than 10 revisions as the number of tokens in the denominator for the nonrepeated revisions, elaborated revisions, and mitigated revisions. Consequently, the values computed for an individual child on these measures were often made unreliable by the small sample of tokens available in the corpus of data for that child. Thus, the variability that we see among children in Figure 3 for these three measures does not indicate real individual differences, but rather reflects the instability of the measures. Thus, these measures were not used in further analyses.

The third group of variables, which can be seen in the third clump to the extreme right of Figure 3, shows medians in the middle range with moderate interquartile ranges (0.17 to 0.26), indicating medium spread. This group of variables, which includes direct forms, revisions, and submissive requests, as well as compliance to requests, suggests that the children are in transition as a group in using these aspects of communicative competence effectively and appropriately in their peer interaction. These measures show modest variation among the children, which reflects genuine individual differences.

Most of the children showed effectiveness in their interaction with peers, as indicated by their initiating their own turns at talk and addressing their requests to designated listeners. Designating a specific listener may be functional in group interaction, where there are many potential listeners. Unless one listener is clearly signaled to respond, a speaker's request may not receive a response by any member of the group, each of whom may assume that someone else is responsible for responding. Perceiving such a situation and becoming aware of one's group responsibilities are relatively sophisticated interactional skills, which may not be fully developed by 6 years of age.

The children also showed effectiveness in their interaction by the high proportion of compliance to requests; however, individual children differed in this skill. Overall, the children did not show effectiveness in revision, when presented with a listener's noncompliance; however, individual differences emerged in this pattern.

The children tended to use direct forms of speech for their requests; however, there were exceptions to this tendency. Typically, their revisions were not semantic elaborations. The relatively infrequent use of elaborated revisions suggests the children may not believe that providing more information necessarily increases the likelihood of their listener's compliance. The data do imply that the ability to revise speech by providing more information may be developed prior to 11 years of age, the age at which researchers in referential communication have suggested this ability is developed (Krauss & Glucksberg, 1969).

The children showed appropriateness in several aspects of their verbal interaction with peers. Almost all of the children usually used

sincere, on-task requests. Intentionally violating the sincerity conditions of requests may be an aspect of communicative competence which is not developed by 6 years of age. Another possible explanation of these data is that the situation does not provide many opportunities for such violations. However, these first-grade children appropriately took submissive positions when making requests most of the time, but there were exceptions to this pattern. They tended not to use the more appropriate indirect request forms, but clearly, some children showed this pattern to a greater extent than others. The children infrequently used mitigated revisions, and their corresponding frequent use of aggravated revisions is consistent with their frequent use of direct forms of initial requests.

Overall, the data show that this group of first graders is effective in obtaining compliance to their requests for action and information more than two-thirds of the time. The typical child usually initiates his or her own turn, and makes requests that are direct, sincere, on-task, and to a designated listener. In cases where the listener does not comply, the typical child will try again only a third of the time, usually by modifying the initial request, adding more information, or by aggravation. The data suggest a pattern of language use for requests which places a premium upon explicitness, directness, and assertiveness. The common pattern seems to be: If at first you don't succeed, you can try again using a different approach. These findings are consistent with those of Ervin-Tripp (1977), Read and Cherry (1978), and Montes (in press). However, the findings contrast with the pattern of language use associated with adults, who express their cooperation and politeness through their use of indirect forms, and their tendency to mitigate and elaborate requests

when initial noncompliance occurs (Ervin-Tripp, 1976; Lakoff, 1973).

Time and type differences. With some exceptions, the patterns described for both requests for information and requests for action were stable from fall to spring. Wilcoxon Matched Pairs Signed Ranks Tests were used to examine the significance of any differences between fall and spring, and differences between the two types of requests. There were no significant differences due to time for any of the characteristics of requests. Requests for information were significantly more likely to be used than requests for action (rate of requests: $z = -1.95$, $p < .05$). Requests for information were more likely to be of a direct form ($z = -5.62$, $p < .01$) and sincere ($z = -4.03$, $p < .01$), and they were more likely to obtain compliance ($z = -4.53$, $p < .01$), compared with requests for action. In contrast, requests for action were significantly more likely to be designated to a particular listener ($z = -3.22$, $p < .01$) and on-task ($z = -2.18$, $p < .05$). Both on-task requests for action ($z = -3.10$, $p < .01$) and dominant requests for information ($z = -2.40$, $p < .01$) were used more often by the children in the fall than in the spring.

This pattern of differential language usage for requests for information and action reflects the increasing sophistication of the language usage of school-age children. Adults' requests for action, typically, do not take a direct form, which is considered to be rude and impolite. The probability of listener understanding may be increased by use of the characteristics of designated-listener and by reference to the topic at hand. On the other hand, the probability of listener understanding and compliance seems to be increased by the use of sincere requests for information of a direct form.

Predicting compliance to requests. An analysis was conducted to address the question: "Do selected characteristics predict whether compliance will be obtained?" This question was addressed by classifying requests in a multidimensional contingency table defined by the following dimensions: compliance, direct-form, designated listener, on-task, sincere, revision, and request for action/information. Log linear models were fit to this table in an effort to find the simplest model that adequately predicted the frequencies which were observed in the table.

In the simplest model it was assumed that the frequencies of compliance were not dependent upon the six characteristics of requests. This model was rejected, $\chi^2 (120) = 354.88$, $p \leq .01$. In a more complex model, it was assumed that the frequencies of compliance were dependent upon the six characteristics. This model was rejected, $\chi^2 (114) = 250.96$, $p \leq .01$, although it was a significant improvement over the first model, $\chi^2 (6) = 103.92$, $p \leq .01$. A more complex model, in which it was assumed that the frequencies of compliance were dependent upon all of the characteristics of requests and that the characteristics were dependent upon each other adequately fit the data, $\chi^2 (99) = 85.77$. This model fit better than the preceding model in which it was assumed that characteristics were independent of each other, $\chi^2 (15) = 165.19$, $p \leq .01$. This model also fit better than one in which it was assumed that there were dependencies among the six characteristics of requests, but there was no effect for the characteristics and compliance, $\chi^2 (6) = 82.92$, $p \leq .01$.

Because the observations are dependent, the significance levels which were obtained are not completely trustworthy. One solution to this problem

is to select a statistic which measures the effect and to jackknife that statistic. The log linear effect on compliance for each characteristic was computed and jackknifed by reading groups. The results of this analysis suggested that three of the six characteristics were more likely to predict compliance: request for action/information, $t(5) = 4.63$, $p \leq .05$; direct form, $t(5) = 2.35$, $p \leq .07$; and designated listener, $t(5) = 2.48$, $p \leq .06$.

Individual differences. Overall, the individual differences among the children are represented in Figure 3 showing the distribution of the various measures. In this section, we will consider selected examples of children who are particularly high in effectiveness and appropriateness on the measures in contrast with several children who are particularly low. In Figure 4, proportions for two selected children, A and B, are displayed on the plots of the interquartile ranges for the measures.

Child A is a good example of the typical profile identified in the previous section for the effective and appropriate first-grade communicator. Amy is usually successful in obtaining compliance to her requests (0.73). She uses a broad repertoire of request forms according to shifting situational demands. But, in particular, she displays that unique characteristic of effective speakers, persistence in continuing to seek responses to her requests when confronted with a noncompliant listener (17 revisions).

In the following example, Amy interacts with two fellow students, Joe and Dave. Amy has been successful in obtaining help from Dave in doing her assignment in the previous 15 exchanges between the two of them. For some reason, Amy then shifts her attention to another child, Joe, in an attempt to enlist his help. Joe is not able to help her, and Amy then

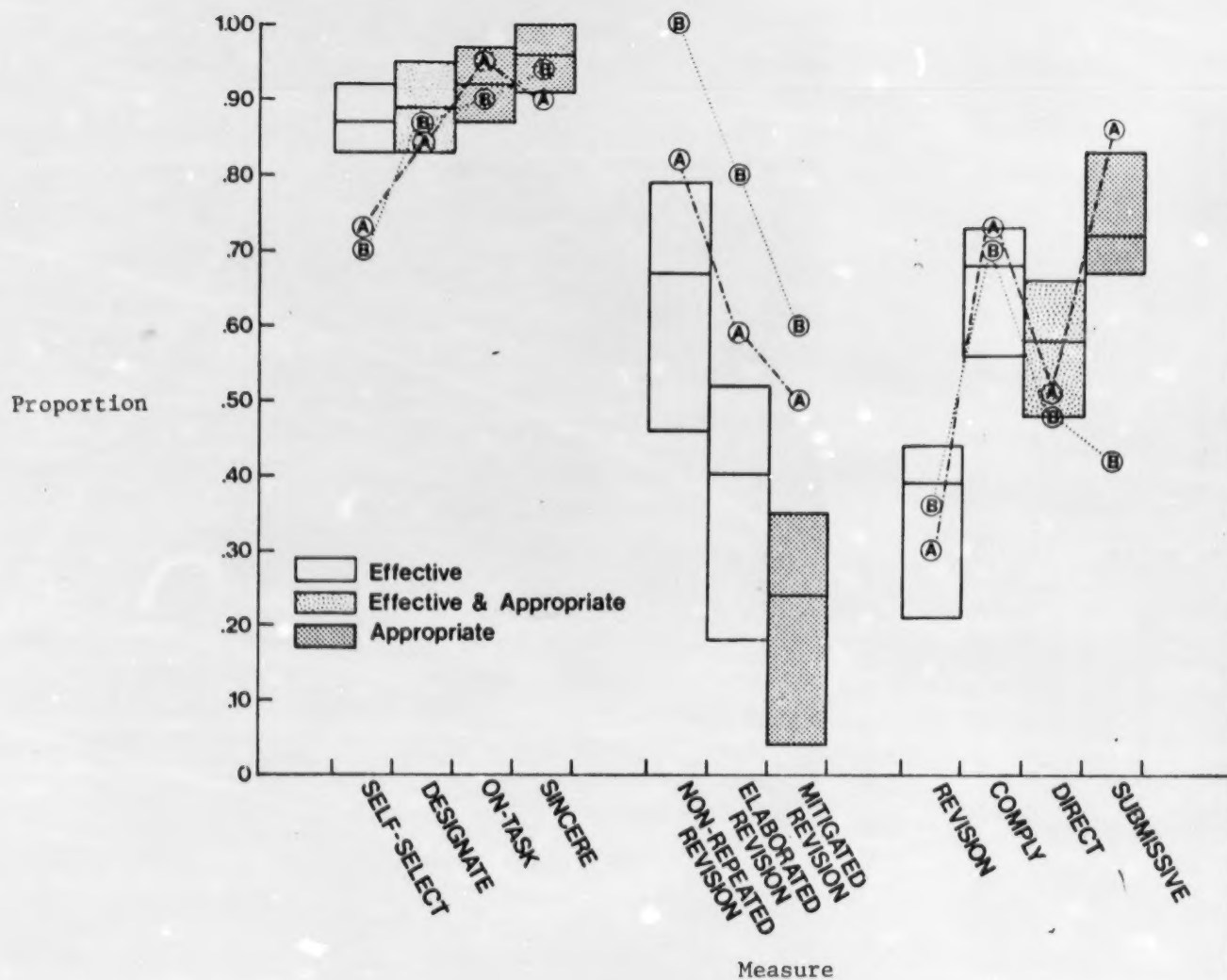


Figure 4. Effective and appropriate speakers.

shifts her attention once again to Dave, by requesting his help for completing an answer to a particular question. At first, Dave is reluctant to help and resists Amy's initial request, which is interrupted by Joe's joining in to request the answer. However, Amy persists and Dave eventually submits to this pressure by supplying her with an answer to the question. Both Dave and Amy then continue to work together on the assignment, which consists of Amy's requesting information and action from Dave, who is the provider of both. The following exchange occurred in late September, during the initial taping of the reading group of these children.

Amy: Okay, what, what's that word?

Joe: Don't ask me.

Amy: Ah, I'll ask him.

(to Dave) What's that word?

Joe: Dave, do you know what we should write, like here?

Amy: Right here.

(several seconds elapse)

I want you to look at my paper.

(several more seconds elapse)

Listen to this.

I've got these words.

I keep gettin' mixed up Dave.

Dave, I keep gettin'.....

Dave: r, the, the,

(The words which Amy has requested are provided by Dave.)

In the spring, Amy continues to show characteristics of effective

and appropriate speakers. One unusual strategy which appears quite effective with some children is an attempt to sustain a cooperative relationship with their listeners. In the following exchange, Amy is successful in securing Dave's cooperation by suggesting he may have something to gain by reviewing his work with her.

Amy: Dave, let's go back and do, and see, what we, what words we missed.

Like I missed all of them.

Dave: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

However, this strategy does not always prove successful as is illustrated in the following exchange.

Amy: Let's do it together.

What is it?

Roy: Don't look at mine Amy.

Amy is an individual who frequently produces adjuncts designating the needs for her requests, and underlying the listener's obligation to respond, as illustrated in the following excerpts.

Amy: Mindy, can I have the pen? I need the eraser for it. I did something wrong.

(Mindy turns over the eraser to Amy.)

Another taping session:

Amy: Oh great.

Can I use your eraser for a minute Sandy?

I made a boo-boo.

Sandy: Oh, that is a boo-boo (giving the eraser to Amy).

And later in the transcript:

Amy: I forgot a word.

Mindy: (no response)

Amy: You, you know you could get me in trouble.

I really forgot this word.

Mindy, Mindy, now I forgot this word.

Another child selected for analysis, child B, obtains compliance to requests 70% of the time. She conforms to the effective/appropriate profile with one exception: Less than half of her requests for information are appropriately submissive. She appears to prefer to use requests for information to feed information or her opinion to another child, and this is noticeably different from the other children in the study. Often, she violates the preconditions underlying a sincere request, that the speaker has a need for the information and believes the listener has both the ability and obligation to provide the information. Consider the following examples:

"What's the matter with you Julie A." (criticizing Julie's behavior)

"That's a pig?" (criticizing Kenny's drawing)

"Peter, are you all done with your worksheet?" (The speaker knows perfectly well that Peter has not finished the assigned task and is asking a question about the obvious fact.)

This unusual characteristic of B's questioning style, which includes several dominant requests for information, does not seem to seriously affect her ability to obtain compliance, however. Many of these dominant requests for information do not receive appropriate responses; therefore, it is possible that B could increase her rate of compliance if she used appropriately submissive requests for information. The data for this child are somewhat difficult to interpret, however, since out of the

14 noncompliances which she received, she revised only 5, which is the denominator for computing the three types of revisions.

Will, shown as W in Figure 5, illustrates an ineffective speaker. At an initial glance, Will seems to conform to the profile of the effective and appropriate speaker, with his high scores on sincerity, on-task, and designated requests. But, we notice that this child has a relatively low rate of compliance to his requests (0.40), tends not to use direct requests initially, and is not as likely as the other children to revise his requests when noncompliance occurs. One explanation for Will's low rate of compliance could be that his initial requests, which are indirect, are also often inexplicit. It is likely that his listeners may not understand exactly what he wants, and thus may respond inappropriately or not at all. In the following example, the students are working in their workbooks and, at this point in the interaction, are discussing the progress each is making. While looking directly at the child next to him, Will produces a request which does not receive a response; it is unclear to the children as well as to the authors exactly what he meant.

Jake: I'm still on "shut the door."

Jebb: I'm not.

Kristy: I'm on 9 and 10.

Will: I wonder when we can?

Jake: I'm right here (pointing).

The child designated as X in Figure 5 is a good example of an ineffective and inappropriate communicator. He is relatively unsuccessful in obtaining responses to his questions (0.27); his requests for information tend not to be appropriately submissive and sincere. In addition, he is

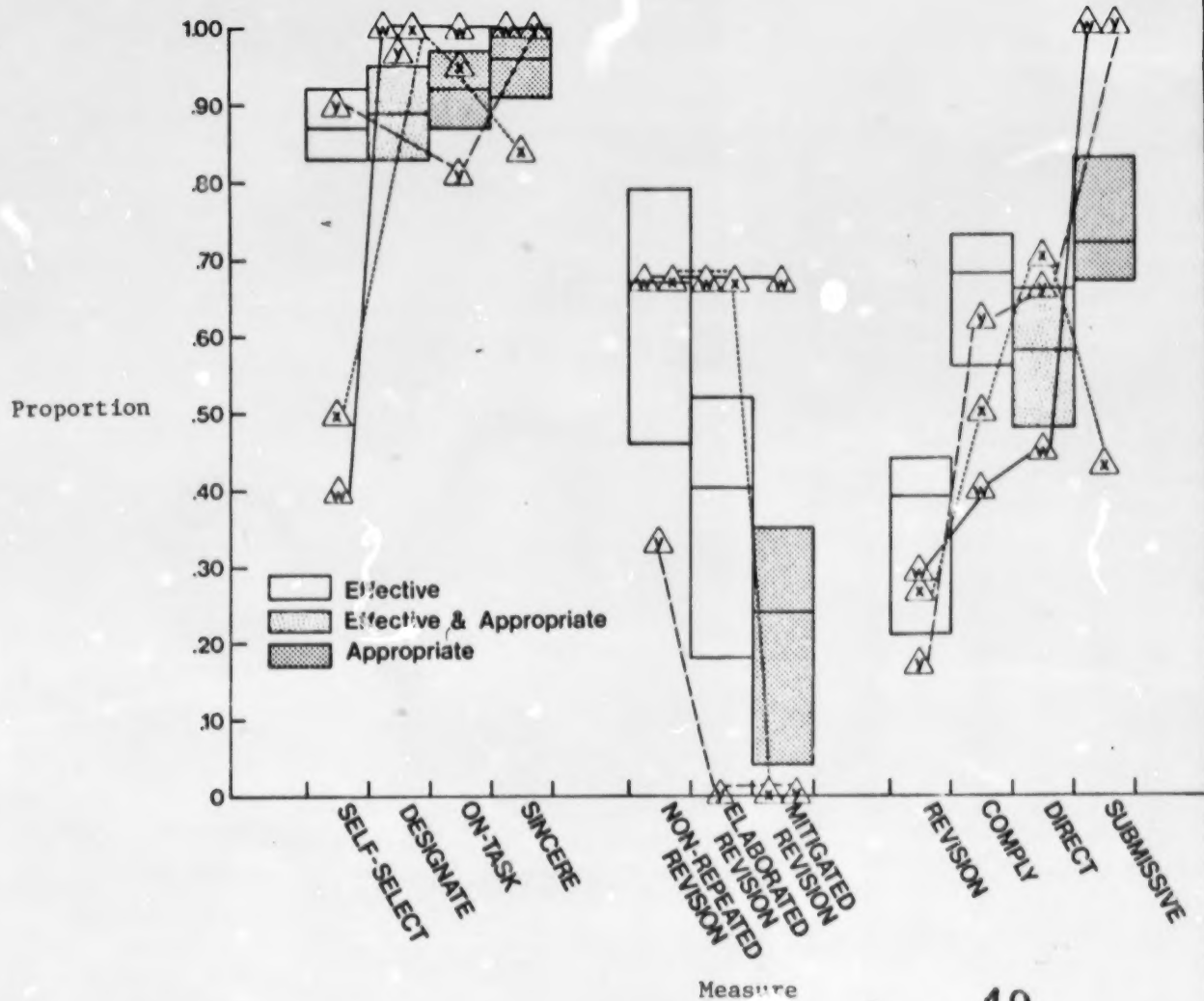


Figure 5. Ineffective and inappropriate speakers.

comparatively unlikely to revise his initial request if initial compliance is not obtained. Data suggest that X may be viewed as a rude child by the others in his group, and in the following excerpts we can see that X violates a basic principle of conversation, that of reciprocity and cooperation, which is also the basis of interaction within the reading groups.

Sandy: Are we supposed to do this one?

X: Don't ask me.

You can do any of 'em.

And again in the following example:

Mary: What's this word X?

X: Never mind.

Mary: X, X.

X: I don't have to.

Mary, you're never gonna learn if ya can't sound words out.

In the next example, X receives the treatment he so willingly gave to Sandy and Mary from another member of the group.

X: Sam, is it this page?

Is this the right page Sam?

Sam.

Sam.

Sam.

Is this the right page?

Sam: Don't ask me.

X: (shrugs) Yup.

Several of the ineffective speakers did not persist in their requests

when initial noncompliance occurred, nor did they seem to contribute to a cooperative ambiance with their listeners. As we have seen in the previous example, when revision behavior does occur, it consists primarily of nonelaborated revisions.

Failures to secure compliance to requests often follow requests which are either off-topic or perceived as insincere. Will is an example of a child who uses insincere requests, as in the following example.

Deana: Hey, these have two bulgy eyes.

May: Bulgy?

Deana: Yeah, bulgy.

Will: Oh, they're bulgy huh?

Deana: Will you shut up?

In this example, we see that Deana has sanctioned Will's violation of Grice's maxim of quantity when he sought information beyond the point of its being of any use. There are also instances of Will's insincere questions receiving no response from the other children.

Relationship of effective and appropriate use of requests to reading achievement, language ability, and social competence. The relationship between selected characteristics of requests and reading achievement, grammatical knowledge, and aspects of social competence was examined. Both social competence and grammatical knowledge underlie the effective and appropriate use of language in situations such as the reading group. Compliance to requests (e.g., acceptable responses) is predicted by selected characteristics of requests (direct form, designated listener, revision, on-task, sincere, and whether the request referred to action or information). Since the content of these responses usually refers directly

to some aspect of the reading assignment, selected aspects of requests were expected to show relationships to reading achievement.

Rank-order correlations were computed between these sets of variables. A standardized score was computed for each child for reading achievement, based on the separate scores on the three reading tests; for grammatical knowledge, based on the individual scores on the two separate assessments; and for social competence, based on the separate scores of social problem solving and sociometric ratings. Rank-order correlations were used since they are as powerful as Pearson correlations, but are less likely to be biased by extreme cases, which occurred occasionally in these data. For a sample of 40, a Kendall's tau rank-order correlation of 0.20 is equivalent to a Pearson correlation of about 0.30, while a tau of 0.30 is equivalent to a Pearson correlation of about 0.45. Only the significant correlations between the effective/appropriate measures of direct, comply, and revision, with the three standard scores were examined. The other effective/appropriate measures were not likely to yield high correlations for purely statistical reasons of lack of variability in the measures showing ceiling effects, and the unreliable measurement in the case of the three types of revision behaviors, which were based on a very small sample of tokens in the denominator of the scores.

The correlation between direct forms and standardized reading achievement is 0.33 ($p \leq .01$). One interpretation of this finding is that children who are clear and explicit in expressing their wants through direct forms are securing compliance to their on-task requests, which may contribute to their development of reading knowledge. Direct forms also showed a significantly high correlation with grammatical

knowledge, $\tau = 0.22$, $p \leq .03$. The obvious explanation for this finding is that the test of grammatical knowledge examines the knowledge of language "out of context." Compliance to request was positively correlated with reading achievement, $\tau = 0.24$, $p \leq .02$. An interpretation of this finding is that effective communicators, who obtain compliance to requests which are almost always concerned with the reading task, are using this knowledge directly to benefit their own reading knowledge as assessed in standardized reading achievement tests. We are not surprised to find, however, that on-task requests do not correlate significantly with reading achievement because of the ceiling effects of the on-task variable; it seems that most of the children are on-task most of the time.

We note that a measure of the fluency and talkativeness of individual children was computed as the number of utterances per minute, which showed a positive and statistically significant correlation with assessed grammatical knowledge, $\tau = 0.21$, $p \leq .03$. In other words, a fluent child does well on standard assessments of grammatical knowledge. The measure of self-selected turns negatively correlates with reading achievement, $\tau = -0.30$, $p \leq .01$, which suggests that individuals frequently attempting to get an audience may not be learning much about reading.

The data does not show a relationship between selected characteristics of requests and social competence as assessed in this study, with the exception of a relationship with designated listeners, $\tau = .20$, $p \leq .05$. It is interesting to note, however, that grammatical knowledge and sociometric ranks are related, $\tau = 0.25$, $p \leq .02$. Children seem to perceive grammatical competence as being related to leadership, academic competence, and affiliation.

Conclusion

In this report, we have introduced the concepts of effective and appropriate speakers. We have examined the language used by first-grade children in their all-student, peer-directed reading groups. The data show that some characteristics of effective and appropriate speakers emerge at different rates; some of these are clearly developed by 6 to 7 years of age, while others show large individual differences. Aspects of effective and appropriate speech, reading achievement, and structural language knowledge are related, which suggests that the individual patterns of development proceed in synchrony and may affect one another.

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